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RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 3462
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 3590
RUEHJA/AMCONSUL SURABAYA 2384
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 000257

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, INR/EAP
SURABAYA 0001

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [KISL](#) [PTER](#) [ID](#)
SUBJECT: MALUKU: VILLAGE FEUDS FUELED BY TRADITION, NOT
RELIGION

REF: 08 SURABAYA 137

Classified By: Surabaya Principal Officer Caryn R. McClelland, reasons
1.5 b and d.

11. (C) Summary: Sporadic fighting between two Muslim villages in Maluku province ended February 6 when village heads restored calm at the urging of Maluku,s Vice Governor.

This long-standing dispute on the island of Haruku re-ignited on January 24 and resulted in one death, many injuries, and the destruction of many homes. During two visits to Ambon, ConGen Surabaya Pol/Econ Officer met with a variety of civil society and religious leaders who explained common misperceptions regarding the root causes of violence there. This most recent conflict underlines the persistence of traditional vendetta and the importance of village ties as a means of conflict resolution. Maluku,s law enforcement and political leadership is finally making headway in calming the communities involved. End Summary.

Machismo, Unemployment and Traditional Violence

12. (C) Maluku,s Muslim-Christian sectarian violence started in the late 1990s and largely ceased in 2005. Tensions remain however, and local NGOs and religious leaders have told us the incidents like mere rumors of blasphemy, can trigger violence (reftel). The proximate causes of violence can range beyond religion to perceived inequality in access to employment or social services. Among the highest in Indonesia, unemployment exacerbates tensions in Maluku. Four lecturers at Ambon,s Islamic State University expressed their frustration with a pending personnel action against them by threatening to kill the Rector with machetes on January 22, 2009. The Rector was not in his office and the lecturers were subdued by Detachment 88 and local police.

13. (C) Memories of past grievances and village loyalties run deep. Kailolo and Pulauv villagers have fought six times over the last five years. Mr. Ikhsan Tauleka, head of Maluku democracy Watch and native of Pulauv, told us Maluku,s culture values machismo and defense of the village. Years of sectarian fighting with firearms has rendered the existing tendency to solve problems with violence more lethal. Men known as fighters during the wider sectarian conflict now trade on this tough reputation to gain status in their villages. Attackers target enemy villagers known to them. People who are not native to these villages are not a target of the violence. However, the fighting between Pulauv and Kailolo has pulled in villagers who now live elsewhere in the province. One villager now resident in Ambon city was shot when boarding a speedboat in an attempt to escape his attackers.

Security Forces Maintaining Order

¶4. (C) Police have found it hard to comprehend and manage the feud between these villagers before disputes flare up. Police were caught flat-footed in January and found it difficult to intervene effectively according to local NGOs and community organizations who demonstrated in Ambon for a better police response (reftel). Local religious leaders told us that there must be a rapid response by police to restore order and prevent a cycle of revenge.

¶5. (C) Mr. Tauleka told us he briefed an Indonesian intelligence officer from Jakarta about the violence in Maluku. Mr. Tauleka said Indonesian authorities are still confused regarding the root causes of sectarian violence and the current village feuds. Detachment 88 and the provincial government are starting to make the right moves, however. The Vice Governor played an important role in bringing village leaders together for a truce, and Detachment 88 has been more effectively targeting small disputes.

¶6. (C) Security forces have improved their response time and capacity for keeping the peace. On February 5, a student at Ambon's Darusalam University and native of Kailolo was stabbed in the leg by two assailants. Although injured; he escaped and got word to Kailolo about the incident. Enraged Kailolo villagers armed themselves with machetes and rushed to Pulau where they burned two houses. Pulau's villagers were readying a counterattack when Detachment 88 and local police arrived on the scene. Police and military personnel later arrested 19 men and patrolled both feuding villages to keep the peace.

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